By JOHN SHAW, Editor, The Islander

on Years of Glory

Lancaster. These Lancasters, incidentally, are only now being supplanted in the RCAF in favor of the more efficient, better ranged Argus, one of the finest submarine hunting aircraft in the world.

The year 1943 saw the height of expansion of RCAF forces overseas. In addition to the 41 squadrons beyond the Canadian borders, there were 37 squadrons for North American defence and transportation duties. At the end of that year there were 215,200 on the roster. And the air training scheme was operating 97 flying schools and 184 ancillary units.

FOR THE D-DAY invasion, 33 squadrons of RCAF bombers, fighters and Coastal Command aircraft got assignments. And No. 162 Squadron, flying out of Iceland, killed four U-boats and shared in the sinking of a fifth. In one of these attacks Fl./Lt. D. E. Hornell won the first RCAF Victoria Cross. Pilot Officer A. C. Wynarski, gunner in a Lancaster, won the second.

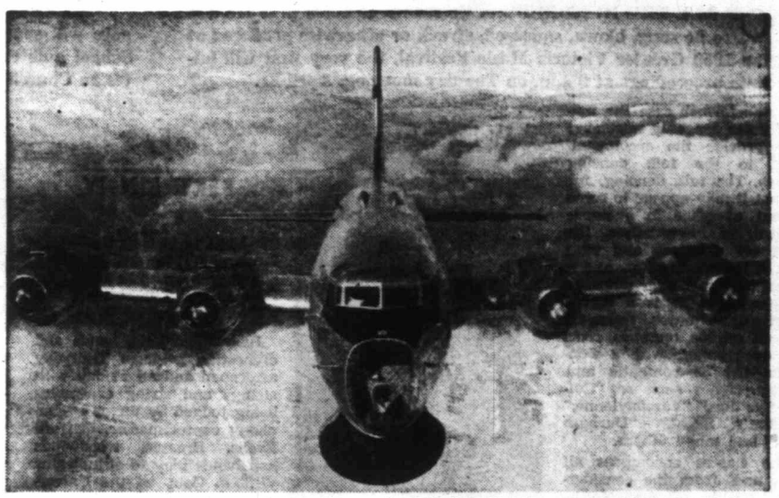
By this time, of course, operational aircraft were being built in Canada in large numbers. When the war in Europe ended, eight RCAF heavy bomber squadrons flew back to Canada in Canadian-built Lancs. They were due to go to the Far East. But Japan surrendered to the A-bomb before they were despatched.

RCAF saw service in the Korean war, and provided NATO squadrons for Europe which are still serving there. The Canadian Sabres were effective aircraft, and the CF-100 was even better. The CF series maintains a high rating of efficiency in spite of the fact they are considered obsolete compared with the Arrow, a 1958 development.

BUT POSSIBLY as great a contribution as any other nation has made to NATO was the RCAF's training plan for men from member nations which put 5,000 pilots and observers into the front line of defence. These young men came from Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Turkey and the United Kingdom. The first program terminated in July, 1958. Then the RCAF undertook to extend it, and additional pilots were trained for Denmark, The Netherlands, Norway and — only 12 years after the final defeat of the Luftwaffe— for West Germany.

This is said to be the age of missiles. The Canadian government has seen fit to cancel the program for building the mighty Avro Arrow, a supersonic interceptor which has proved itself in exhaustive tests as fine an aircraft as any built in any land today. Men of the RCAF feel an understandable regret that the government has relegated them to a role which may deprive NATO forces of their powerful support. They are still flying, of course. But there is a writing on the wall. The RCAF will acquire the American Bomarc missile and man most of the operational positions of the DEW line in Canada.

Does this mean, they ask, that the magnificent RCAF becomes a military country cousin of a wealthy neighbor?



This is the Argus, largest and best-equipped anti-submarine aircraft in the world, at present serving with the RCAF. It is a Canadair weapon, developed from the Bristol Britannia civil airliner. It has a combat range of more than 4,000 miles, carries a crew of 15, and is powerfully armed. Its electronic detector system is highly efficient.

Russian Economy . . : By TED SHACKLEFORD

PLATINUM in POTS

This is the three ruble platinum coin issued by Russia in 1828. The face value of the coin is about 75 cents. The intrinsic value, plus the premium put on the coin by collectors, has raised its price nowadays to $60.

YOU name the metal and almost certainly, somewhere in the world, someone has made, is making, or will soon be making it into coins.

Minting of coins began with the Greeks with gold, silver and electrum—an alloy of gold and silver—the Romans used the same metals, plus cast copper coins, and through the ages men have minted coins made of steel, nickel, copper, brass, aluminium, zinc and platinum.

The platinum coins are of two kinds — counterfeits of gold coins and genuine coins.

Way back when platinum was still just a metallurgical curiosity, in the early 19th century, it was used to fake gold coins because of its weight.

The fakes were dipped, plated or washed with genuine gold to give the color and then they were passed into circulation as quickly as possible, before the plating wore off.

As it happens, these counterfeits are today worth three times the value of the genuine coins—platinum sells for some $90 an ounce.

The genuine platinum coins were also issued early in the 19th century, when a huge deposit of the metal was found in the Ural Mountains in Russia.

This strange silvery metal, so heavy and so hard, was called "devil's metal" by the Russians. And with a practical turn of mind they decided it would be excellent for uses where ability to resist wear was a prerequisite.

So they made it into a set of 1,000 pots and pans for the Tsar's palace kitchen, and they issued three denominations of coins.

The pots and pans at today's prices would bring something over $250,000. The coins have increased at like rates.

Original values of the coins were three rubles (75 cents), six rubles ($1.50) and nine rubles ($2.25). Today they sell for $60, $200 and $600.

Gold, in use from earliest times as a medium of exchange, is still used by some seven countries for coinage Not included among those seven countries is Canada, which has about one cent's worth of gold in every nickel, together with tiny amounts of iron and cobalt.

Some nine million of the 1751 - 1951 commemorative nickels were issued early in the year, made from nickel, and then the steel coins were minted.

The nine million coins have almost disappeared from circulation, as people believe there is a mistake in the date and they are valuable. The coins will never be worth more than five cents each.

The four million steel coins went into circulation and nobody bothered about saving them. The result is that an uncirculated steel nickel is now worth $2.

Canada's silver coins still contain silver—eight parts silver to two parts copper, for hardness—but many countries, such as Britain and Australia have no silver in their silver coins.

All slver coins were withdrawn from circulation, replaced with cupro-nickel coins (half copper and half nickel), and the silver coins were melted down and the silver reclaimed.

The aluminum United States cent is perhaps the most common aluminum coin to Canadians, althoug other countries have used the metal.

But whether it is lead, copper, gold or platinum, the value of a coin to a collector still depends first of all on its rareity and secondly on its condition. The intrinsic value of the metal used in coins has some bearing on their values to some extent, but the major premium over face value comes from rareity.

Age has no real bearing in the matter—European coin dealers sell ancient Greek and Roman coins at so much a pound in job lots.

The 50-cent piece is the only one which carries Canada's coat of arms at present.

First issues of the new coin were released in the eastern provinces about the beginning of April, but they will take some time to reach Victoria.

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Worth looking out for in your change is the new Canadian 50 cent piece, announced in The Daily Colonist months ago, before it was officially announced by the Canadian Mint.

When parliament adopted a simplified coat of arms for Canada it automatically meant that the coin would have to be redesigned on the back.